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Development Account project
Strengthening statistical capacity in support of progress towards the Internationally Agreed
Developments Goals in countries of South Asia

First Steering Committee Meeting
21-24 July 2008, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Main Conclusions and Action Plan

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1. The First Steering Committee (SC) meeting of the Development Account Project on Strengthening statistical capacity in support of progress towards the Internationally Agreed Developments Goals in countries of South Asia was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on the sideline of the Workshop of the Organization of National Statistical Systems (NSS) and User-Producer relations for countries in South Asia. The SC had two sessions. The first one took place on 21st July 2008, while the second one – on 24th July 2008, respectively.

2. The meeting was attended by:

    a. The Chief Statisticians and senior government statisticians from Afghanistan (Mr. Ghafoori); Bangladesh (Mr. Shawkat Ali); Bhutan (Mr. Dorji); India (MR. Pronab Sen); Maldives (Mr. Thowfeek); Nepal (Mr. Bastola); Pakistan (Mr. Hashimi) and Sri Lanka (Ms. Vidyaratne);
    b. UNSD staff members (Mr. Schweinfest, Ms. Antonova) and UNESCAP staff member (Mr. Gennari);
    c. Other country representatives as observers.

Main Conclusions

The Steering Committee:

3. Acknowledged that there are needs for national statistical capacity-building activities, including training, in majority of South Asia countries to enable them to produce high quality statistical data necessary for promoting the evidence-based socio-economic policies and achieving internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

4. Considered that the time of launching this DA project is opportune for South Asia countries. The project will support and build on the ongoing statistical capacity-building

initiatives in the region, including those currently underway in the context of SAARC Stat.

5. Fully agreed with the objective of the project, i.e. to strengthen the capacity of National Statistical Systems in the South Asia region, so to enable them to meet their statistical needs and to improve the production and analysis, on a regular basis, of benchmark statistics required for national development planning and for monitoring of the internationally agreed developments goals.

6. Agreed that the following priority areas of work should be addressed by the project:

    a. Strengthening statistical organization, autonomy and coordination among statistical agencies and other stakeholders;
    b. Strengthening capacity of NSS in the areas of statistical data analysis, forecasting and dissemination;
    c. Enhancing the knowledge of the NSOs staff through comprehensive training on statistical methods and standards;
    d. Strengthening south-south cooperation through sharing of information and good practices among South Asia countries;
    e. Strengthening the national websites of South Asia statistical offices and their links to a regional one.

7. Identified the following specific statistical domains as thematic areas for the planned workshops:

    a. National accounts with an emphasis on the compilation of quarterly and regional national accounts;
    b. Population and housing census with an emphasis on GIS, census data processing, data capturing, data editing etc.;
    c. User interaction, data analysis and microdata.

8. In the context of the implementation of project activities agreed to on concrete follow-up activities as outlined in Annex 1.

9. Suggested that the following tangible outputs of the project might be considered:

    a. South Asia regional classification of economic activities, based on ISIC, Rev.4;
    b. Statistical Yearbook of South Asia countries;
    c. Statistical Database for South Asia countries;
    d. South Asia regional website.

Action Plan

	Activity/event	Place/host	Time	Follow up action	Responsibility
1.	IT Working Group meeting	Pakistan	Q4 2008	Concept paper for the design and organization of the website send by Pakistan to the SC members – September 2008	Pakistan
				Assessment of the current state of IT development and IT needs of South Asia countries[1]	UNSD
				Website template	Pakistan/UNSD
				Procurement proposals	South Asia countries
2.	National Accounts workshop	India (to be confirmed)	Q1 2009	Methodological topics: QNA and Regional NA	UNSD
				Questionnaire on NA for South Asia countries	Sri Lanka
3.	Workshop on Population and housing census - *incl. Disability statistics*	Nepal	Q2 2009	Methodological topics: GIS, census data processing, data capturing, data editing etc. [2]	UNSD
4.	Workshop on user interaction, data analysis and microdata	To be decided during the next Steering Committee meetings	To be decided	Harmonization of development indicators with special focus on the indicators used in major conference follow up and MDGs	UNSD, UNESCAP and South Asia countries
				Statistical yearbook of South Asia countries	Bangladesh
				Note on the current state of yearbook preparation and the areas where help is needed – August - September 2008	Bangladesh

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[1] The assessment will be made on the basis of a short questionnaire prepared by the UNSD.
[2] The exact methodological topics will be further specified after the UNSD/UNESCAP Workshop on Census data processing to be held in Bangkok, from 15 to 19 September 2008.

5.	Study tours	Various	2008-2010	Explanatory note setting out rules for the organization of study tours and requesting country proposals – Q3/08	UNSD
				Outlines (detailed programmes) of the statistical areas to be covered during the study tours, objectives and expected accomplishments	South Asia countries
6.	Steering Committee meetings	UNESCAP Stat Bangkok	December 2008	Second meeting of the Steering Committee	UNSD/UNESCAP
		SAARC Stat Bhutan	April 2009	Third meeting of the Steering Committee	UNSD/SC
7.	Advisory services - incl. assistance for the preparation of the Regional Classification of Activities	South Asia countries	Second half of 2008	Countries to submit requests for advisory services and area of statistics	UNSD/UNESCAP
				Advisory services coordinated among 2-3 countries	UNSD/UNESCAP